

Health of Home and School.

LEAFLET NO. 9.

ISSUED BY THE STATE BOARD OF HEALTH OF MAINE.

Cuts and Other Wounds.

A surgeon who was in the war of the rebellion, comparing the treatment of wounds at that time with the treatment which wounds received in the Spanish-American War about forty years later, remarks that, in that earlier war, antiseptics were not used; no attempt was made to sterilize the part to be operated on; or the surgeon's hands, or his instruments; in the hospitals the nurse went from patient to patient with the same pan, sponge, and dressing instruments unsterilized.

In the Spanish-American War every man carried a little package the "first aid," containing gauze and bandages and other necessities for the immediate dressing of wounds, and which could be applied at once by the man himself or by his comrade. In the work of the surgeons there was as rigid an adherence to the rules of cleanliness as possible.

The results are, while in the Civil War there was a death-rate of twenty-five per cent. from gun shot wounds, in the Spanish-American War the death rate from the same kind of injuries was only six per cent.

First Aid in the Home.

Twenty-five per cent. of the wounded dying in the Civil War, and not one-quarter as many in our later war should set us to thinking. In Leaflet No. 4 you have been told something about the danger of uncleanness in and around the home. This leaflet is to show the danger of continuing in the old unclean ways of taking care of cuts and other wounds, and to tell, how, in the home or at school, to apply the "first aid" dressing.

Sources of Danger.

If cuts and other ordinary wounds are clean and are kept clean (surgically clean), they will heal quickly and there will be only slight inflammation, no "festering," or formation of pus, or blood poisoning, or other serious results; but if their treatment is not in accordance with the laws of strict cleanliness, dangerous results may follow slight cuts and scratches, the prick of a thorn or a splinter, or the bite of an animal.

The skin protects the tissues beneath it against injuries and excludes germs which, when they have a chance, cause inflammation, suppuration, blood poisoning, lockjaw, erysipelas and gangrene.

The germs which produce these dangerous conditions or diseases come from unclean things causing the wounds; from the dirty condition of the skin through which the wounds are made; from unclean hands which handle or dress the wounds; from water which has not been sterilized by boiling before it is used for washing wounds, or water in unclean basins, or applied with unclean sponges or cloths; from dirty substances which are applied to wounds; and from unclean (unsterilized) cloths or compresses or bandages applied to wounds in dressing them.

Of unclean things, the teeth and claws of cats and dogs when they cause wounds always carry through the skin possibilities of serious danger; old nails or sharp stones in or upon the earth carry with their dirt the danger of lockjaw because the germ of that awful disease lives in the soil, particularly unclean soil.

Of unclean skins, that of the most cleanly person sometimes harbors in its scales or meshes the dangerous germs of suppuration; and the skin of the boy celebrating the Fourth often supplies the germs of lockjaw which the exploding cap of the toy pistol drives through the skin.

Of unclean substances applied to wounds, puff balls to stop bleeding, or any other materials which have been exposed to dust and dirt are dangerous.

The Domestic First Aid Package.

In a clean wide-mouthed bottle with a clean stopper, keep a half pound of boric acid for use on man or beast. It will not cost much.

Sealed up in clean paper wrappers keep a supply of compresses of different sizes made of surgical gauze all ready to use at short notice. The surgical gauze can be had from the drug stores, or the compresses can be made of cheese-cloth or old soft linen or cotton which has been washed and then boiled, and then, on clean plates, has been dried in an oven and left there exposed for several hours to as great a degree of heat as may be without scorching or burning it. It would be still safer if these compresses and the sterilized cheese-cloth are wrapped inside of several thicknesses of sterilized cheese-cloth before the paper wrappers are put on.

Get from the druggist also an assortment of sterilized bandages from one to two inches wide and of different lengths. They come in air-tight packages and should never be opened until they are to be used.

Get from the druggist also four ounces of creolin. Have it labeled "Poison."

Keep these things all closed up tightly away from dust in a special clean box where they may quickly be found when needed.

How to Use Them.

If in the home or school an accident occurs and the skin is cut or torn, the first consideration is the question of cleanliness of the wound and its surroundings. If it is a clean cut made with a clean knife or other instrument, simply apply the dressing as soon as bleeding has ceased. Unnecessary and unskilful washing or handling may infect a wound which at first is all right for favorable healing.

But if the injured part were dirty, or cut or torn by anything which would be likely to carry dirt,—the kick of a horse, or cuts from nails or stones on the foot of the bare footed boy, for instance,—one teaspoonful of creolin should be poured into one quart of water in a clean bowl or basin. We will call this the "creolin wash."

First, the person attending to the dressing of the wound should wash his hands, his fingers particularly, very thoroughly with soap and water. Then soak the fingers three or four minutes in a little of the creolin wash. Do this so the fingers may not carry infection to the wound.

Next, wash out the wound very carefully with the creolin wash and wash also the surrounding skin. Do the washing with a piece of clean cotton cloth or cloth made safe by pouring boiling water over it, or by soaking in the creolin wash. If creolin is not at hand use water which has been boiled and then cooled.

Then, after the parts have dried, apply the dressing. In applying it, take a piece of the sterilized cheese-cloth or surgical gauze large enough so that, folded about eight thicknesses, it will cover the wound and extend beyond it one or two inches. Sprinkle the wound plentifully with the boric acid. Sprinkle with the boric acid that side of the compress which is to be applied to the wound. Use from a quarter to a level teaspoonful or more. Apply the compress. Apply evenly and smoothly a bandage to hold the compress in place. Leave the dressing in place until the doctor comes, or, if medical aid cannot be had, leave it undisturbed for two or three days if the wound is apparently doing well, and if there is no soakage of the compress and bandage indicating suppuration.

In redressing, simply apply more boric acid with a clean compress and bandage if the wound is free from suppuration and is apparently healing favorably. If not, cleanse with the creolin wash, proceeding as with the first dressing.

For domestic use the dry dressing is best. Do not cover wounds with "sticking plaster," collodion, "new skin," or any such stuff. They are dangerous. Strips of adhesive plaster may, however, be used to hold other dressings in place and are often very useful for that purpose.